

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 25

INTRODUCED BY J. PETERSON, LAIBLE, WILLIAMS

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA URGING THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM TO STUDY MONTANA'S RURAL AND URBAN ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND HOW TO FACILITATE PARTNERSHIPS AND INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS; AND REQUESTING A REPORT OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LEGISLATURE.

WHEREAS, sustainable economic ~~and agricultural~~ development in Montana is jeopardized by a dramatically growing divide between Montana's rural and urban communities; and

WHEREAS, rural communities face increasing economic challenges due to a declining population and a lack of access to technology, capital, political influence, health care, ~~and~~ educational resources, AND AGRICULTURAL MARKET SERVICES; and

WHEREAS, urban communities are dependent on rural areas to meet increasing demands for energy, agricultural products, timber, ~~and~~ clean water, AND ACCESS TO HUNTING, FISHING, OPEN SPACE, AND RECREATION; and

WHEREAS, urban development continues to shrink the rural areas available for the agricultural production, energy production, and natural resource development required to meet increasing demand; and

WHEREAS, rural and urban communities are interdependent and share a common interest in and an aspiration for a sustainable economic future for Montana; and

WHEREAS, Montana needs to develop solutions to the rural and urban divide and these solutions can only be reached through partnership and collaboration based on an integrated community vision that connects rather than divides Montana's rural and urban communities; and

WHEREAS, the Montana University System has the knowledge base, research facilities, and outreach capabilities to take a leadership role to promote research, analysis, and dialog on these issues; and

WHEREAS, if Montana can establish a successful ongoing approach to examining rural and urban challenges and developing integrated solutions, Montana can be a model that will assist our country's rural and urban states to work together rather than against each other based on a common vision for a sustainable economic future for all of America.

1 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
2 STATE OF MONTANA:

3 That the Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Higher Education are urged to direct appropriate
4 university resources to conduct a study that:

5 (1) examines the nature of the rural and urban divide in Montana;

6 (2) involves the collection and analysis of data concerning Montana's rural and urban demographics,
7 business and industrial growth, workforce needs, food and water consumption and agricultural and livestock
8 production capabilities, energy consumption and production capabilities, natural resource consumption and
9 development capabilities, access to health care and educational resources, and other rural and urban issues;

10 (3) brings urban and rural interest groups, stakeholders, and policy analysts together to share information
11 and discuss ways to build partnerships in order to develop action plans for integrating rural and urban interests
12 and moving Montana toward a unified approach to rural and urban issues; and

13 (4) explores the feasibility of conducting a pilot project and establishing and funding a rural-urban institute
14 as part of the Montana University System that can provide ongoing research and analysis of rural and urban
15 interdependence and facilitate ongoing strategic planning in the public and private sectors to overcome the
16 rural-urban divide and move Montana forward as one Montana.

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the findings and recommendations of the study be presented to the
18 legislature's education and local government interim committee before July 1, 2010.

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